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HEPHAESTUS FORGING ARMOR FOR ACHILLES

A MANTELPIECE BY PEDONI

THERE is now on exhibition in Wing F, Gallery 5, one of the most important of the Museum's recent purchases in the field of decorative sculpture. This is a Renaissance mantelpiece in marble, exquisitely carved and signed by the sculptor Giovanni Gaspare Pedoni, who worked in Cremona at the end of the fifteenth century and in the first years of the sixteenth century. The mantelpiece measures $65\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height by $77\frac{7}{8}$ inches in width; the depth is $27\frac{3}{4}$ inches. These proportions are in harmony with the delicacy of the ornament which would have been less appropriate on a mantelpiece of larger and more imposing design.

Two slender, fluted Roman Doric columns, the echini and tori ornamented with the egg and dart pattern, support an entablature of three parts — architrave, frieze, and cornice — enriched with beading, dentils, egg and dart mouldings, and other ornament. On the front of each column, suspended by ribbons from a grotesque mask, is an escutcheon with armorial bearings. The frieze consists of three panels sculptured in fairly high relief with scenes from the life of Achilles. The central panel is twice the length of the other two, which are separated from it by consoles in low relief with acanthus leaf ornament. At each extremity of the frieze is a portrait medallion enclosed by a frame or wreath and attached by ribbons to the face of a small pilaster. On the sides the frieze is decorated with foliage grotesques. An escutcheon on the pilaster forming the

left extremity of the right side is inscribed
HOC|OPUS|ME|FEC(IT)|ZOVAN|PED|ON.

From left to right the subjects represented on the frieze are (1) Thetis immersing the infant Achilles in the Styx; (2) Hephaestus forging armor for Achilles at the request of Thetis; (3) the death of Achilles. In the first scene, the sea deity Thetis kneels at the left of the bank of the river, holding by the right heel her infant son whom she plunges in the water of the Styx. In consequence of this, it will be remembered, Achilles was rendered invulnerable in all but the heel by which she held him. Achilles having lost his arms through the death of Patroclus, who had worn them in battle, Thetis obtained for him from Hephaestus a suit of impenetrable armor. In the second scene Hephaestus is represented on the left working over his anvil as he beats out a piece of plate (the famous shield?). Kneeling beside him is a youthful armorer busy with the helmet. Further on at the right Thetis is seated, regarding the scene. With her right hand she holds the completed cuirass. Behind her, emerging from the waves of the sea, is her richly decorated chariot. The background at the left represents the wall of a stone building with a small barred window. In the third scene, Achilles has been wounded in his vulnerable heel by the shaft of Paris, guided by Apollo, and kneeling prepares to draw the arrow from his wound. He wears the armor made for him by Hephaestus. At the left may be seen the prows of several galleys. On the one nearest is the figure of a nude warrior. A barren tree is represented at the right.

For the Palazzo Raimondi in Cremona,



ACHILLES IMMERSSED IN THE STYX



DEATH OF ACHILLES

built by the celebrated humanist, Eliseo Raimondi, in 1495-96, Pedoni executed several capitals, one of which is signed and dated 1499, and at least two mantelpieces. One of these, a masterpiece of decorative sculpture, dated 1502, is now in the Palazzo Comunale, Cremona; the other, less elaborate, dated 1501, is now in the Casa

Trecchi at Maleo. Our mantelpiece in its general proportions and details closely resembles that in the Palazzo Comunale, which differs from ours principally in the frieze, which is ornamented with grotesque designs instead of figural scenes.

J. B.

